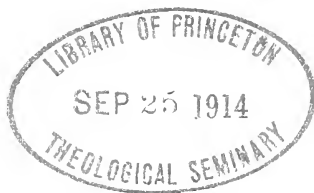


THE SHORT COURSE SERIES

THE HIGHER POWERS  
OF THE SOUL



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M'Hardy, George.

The higher powers of the  
soul





THE SHORT COURSE SERIES



THE  
HIGHER POWERS OF THE SOUL

## GENERAL PREFACE



THE title of the present series is a sufficient indication of its purpose. Few preachers, or congregations, will face the long courses of expository lectures which characterised the preaching of the past, but there is a growing conviction on the part of some that an occasional short course, of six or eight connected studies on one definite theme, is a necessity of their mental and ministerial life. It is at this point the projected series would strike in. It would suggest to those who are mapping out a scheme of work for the future a variety of subjects which might possibly be utilised in this way.

The appeal, however, will not be restricted to ministers or preachers. The various volumes will meet the needs of laymen and

## General Preface

Sabbath-school teachers who are interested in a scholarly but also practical exposition of Bible history and doctrine. In the hands of office-bearers and mission-workers the "Short Course Series" may easily become one of the most convenient and valuable of Bible helps.

It need scarcely be added that while an effort has been made to secure, as far as possible, a general uniformity in the scope and character of the series, the final responsibility for the special interpretations and opinions introduced into the separate volumes, rests entirely with the individual contributors.

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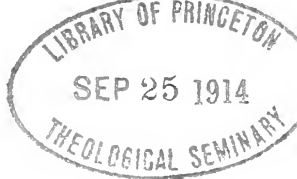
CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS



The Short Course Series

EDITED BY

REV. JOHN ADAMS, B.D.



THE  
HIGHER POWERS  
OF THE SOUL

BY

REV. GEO. M'HARDY, D.D.

AUTHOR OF "SAVONAROLA" AND "SCENES AND CHARACTERS OF  
THE EARLY WORLD"

NEW YORK  
CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS

1913

TO  
MY CONGREGATION  
AT  
KIRKCALDY

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"For I do nothing but go about persuading you all, old and young alike, not to take thought for your persons, or your properties, but first and chiefly to care about the greatest improvement of the soul."

SOCRATES.

"Take all in a word: the truth in God's breast  
Lies trace for trace upon ours impressed:  
Though He is so bright and we so dim,  
We are made in His image to witness Him."

BROWNING.

**I.**

**THE TREATMENT OF CONSCIENCE.**



## I.

### THE TREATMENT OF CONSCIENCE.

“And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men.”  
—ACTS xxiv. 16.

“Holding . . . a good conscience.”—I TIM. i. 19.

“The light of the body is the eye ; if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness ! ”—MATT. vi. 22, 23.

“Yea, and why even of yourselves judge ye not what is right ? ”—LUKE xii. 57.

IN an arresting picture, entitled “The Dweller in the Innermost,” George Frederick Watts represents conscience as an ethereal womanly figure, sitting retired in a shrine of mystery, listening—listening intently—and rapt in thought. On her head is a crown, gemmed in front with a

# The Higher Powers of the Soul

gleaming star. In her hand she holds a trumpet ready ; while a number of sharp-pointed darts are laid across her knees. She is waiting to hear a higher voice, prepared to sound forth the message when it comes, and to hurl the darts if the message be not obeyed.

That picture is a striking symbolic representation of the function which conscience is meant to fulfil in the life of man. Conscience is the witness for God in the inner depths of our nature. It is the organ or faculty through which the Divine Spirit speaks, sometimes with a note that is loud, and even startling, but often in softer tones, gentle, appealing, yet marvellously penetrating and not to be heedlessly ignored. As Byron says,—

“ Yet still there whispers the small voice within,  
Heard through Gain’s silence, and o’er Glory’s din.  
Whatever creed be taught, or land be trod,  
Man’s conscience is the oracle of God.”

It is one of the lessons forced on us as we move forward in life, that character and well-being largely depend on the treatment of conscience ; and the treatment of conscience



# The Treatment of Conscience

is a point to which both Jesus and Paul specially refer. For conscience is given as a means of guidance for conduct ; and although it exists in all, it may be so dealt with by different persons as to be far more of a blessing and help to some than it is to others. Experience perpetually teaches that a sound, vigorous condition of the conscience is absolutely essential to real worth and happiness. And if this high faculty is to serve the gracious purpose for which it was designed, it becomes imperative on us to "exercise" ourselves, like the Apostle, in securing for it its due place and power in our life.

## I. IT MUST BE ALERT.

The first point to be aimed at is to keep the conscience *alert*. There is such a thing as a torpid conscience. It may fall into a state of sluggish dulness, incapable of giving a quick or clear decision on a question of right and wrong. This may be brought about by a continued process of easy-going indifference, or by fevered engrossment in

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superficial vanities, sordid aims, selfish expediences and gratifications. These things may so act upon a person's conscience that it grows benumbed ; he loses his susceptibility to the voice and call of duty. The inner witness is reduced to a condition of semi-torpor, and the man goes blundering on, tampering with the eternal laws of truth and right, not realising the moral and spiritual harm he is working for himself and for others. Endless is the mischief caused in the world by a dull and blunted conscience.

It is of untold moment, therefore, that a steady effort be made to fight clear of every practice or form of self-indulgence which may have a deadening effect, and to keep carefully within the range of sacred influences,—that the conscience may be stirred to sensitiveness, and set on the alert. To constrain the mind to dwell in the pure atmosphere of Christ's spirit and Christ's ideas is to gain a quickened conscience, a keener power to distinguish the high and noble in thought or action from the low and the mean. And thereby a person acquires

# The Treatment of Conscience

some clear assurance that the way he is prompted to take is the way directed by the Lord.

## 2. IT MUST BE ENLIGHTENED.

A second point is to get the conscience *enlightened*. The conscience may be educated, just as any of the bodily organs may be. The eye may be educated to discern greater niceties of colour and of form ; the ear may be educated to appreciate subtler harmonies or discords in sounds ; and the sense of touch may be educated to an extraordinary degree of delicacy and correctness of feeling.

And so, also, this organ of spiritual sense, Conscience, needs educating to bring it to its most reliable point of efficiency. It is well known how the standard of right has differed at different stages of the world's history,—how, in fact, it has gradually risen as the centuries rolled by. Good men in the past tolerated certain features in their lives which are now held to be unworthy, without feeling them to be unworthy,—as, for

# The Higher Powers of the Soul

example, passionate cruelty to enemies, the fondness for revenge, the holding of slaves, or sharing in the gains of slavery, the persecution of those who professed unrecognised religious opinions. It was due mainly to the want of enlightenment. The conscience was not sufficiently educated to see the evil that may lie in forms of action which have been long sanctioned by habit and usage. And in the same way still, well-meaning people may do things that are really wrong, without being aware that they are wrong; or they may neglect obligations of duty without perceiving them to be obligations. They act according to conscience, so far, but their conscience needs enlightenment,—needs to be brought right into the presence of a higher ideal,—that its conceptions of truth and goodness may be enlarged, made more delicate and refined.

This is what happens when the conscience is drawn under the influence of Jesus Christ. In His presence conscience recognises its sovereign Lord and King. There begins to dawn then a new delicacy of moral and

# The Treatment of Conscience

spiritual perception. The moment we turn our minds seriously to the life and words of the Master, our ideas of duty become clearer, sharper, more vivid, and we discover a right and a wrong in things which before had appeared indifferent. Now and again, indeed, as we reflect on the pure elevation of Jesus, we become aware of some fault or other in our disposition or ways of acting which had never previously struck us, and we say to ourselves with a start, "I never thought of it before ; I never saw it in that light, else I would have been ashamed of it long ago."

Here we find one of the special benefits to be derived from earnest and frequent attendance on Christian teaching. It illumines the conscience by bringing it close into contact with the highest standard of feeling and conduct. It stimulates the moral sense by setting before it the vision of a peerless goodness. And nothing is better fitted to educate the conscience and make it a sure guide in matters of right and duty, than to keep the Lord Jesus ever in view, endeavour-

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ing to see things in the light which His life and truth reveal. In all questions of responsibility, when we are uncertain or perplexed, it is always salutary and helpful to place ourselves in imagination by His side, and try to conceive what, in our circumstances, Jesus would be likely to do. That would develop our power of moral discernment. It would vivify our better feelings. It would heighten our ideas as to what life and character should be. And it would deliver us from the blinding errors of moral judgment which so often lead us astray and spoil our peace.

## 3. IT MUST BE TRUE.

A third point to be aimed at is to preserve the conscience *true*. We sometimes hear of a ship being wrecked through the deflection of the compass. It was a good ship, with a compass in sufficiently good order and quite well fitted to serve its use when it left the maker's hands. But there was some part of the cargo taken on board of that ship which acted injuriously on the movements of the

## The Treatment of Conscience

compass—some kind of metal, perhaps, which by its subtle influence drew the needle aside, so that it could not keep its point steadily directed towards the magnetic pole—with the result that the ship was diverted from its course, and struck on hidden rocks that were supposed to be far away. Well, conscience is the moral compass for the voyage of life, and it likewise may be deflected, warped. Many launch forth on the great world-ocean, like a fine vessel, finely equipped for ploughing a sure way amid winds and waves. They are full of promise and hope; their conscience is in a fairly good condition, awake and alert, enlightened and educated also to a favourable degree. But at one port of call or another in the great life-voyage, they take into their heart some particular taste, some inclination or ambition, which contains in it an element of risk. It may be an anxious greed of gain to which they give place and room, or an eager passion for praise, position, or showy display, or a secret craving for some form of self-indulgent pleasure. And any one of these feelings

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may put the conscience in danger by the subtle influence it begins to exert.

It is easy for people to persuade themselves that all is well, and to make-believe that what they are doing is right, because it happens to fall in with the self-gratifying inclinations they are cherishing. The compass of their life, their moral sense, seems to correspond with their personal likings and wishes. Yes ; but what if that compass has been deflected, and the moral sense swayed aside from its true direction by those very likings and wishes ? What if conscience has been twisted to suit the demands of selfish expediency ? Then, unless care be taken in time, life's voyage may end on a barren shore of dreary disappointment, if not in spiritual wreck and disaster.

It is of the highest importance, therefore, that we should, from time to time, endeavour to do what every competent ship-captain is careful to do—*test our compass*. The captain brings out his sextant, and, holding it up to the sun at mid-day, takes his bearings, and finds out whether the needle is pointing true



# The Treatment of Conscience

to the pole ; and if it is not, he re-arranges his cargo accordingly. So it is our part also, now and again, to bring out our New Testament, or what we know of its teaching, and, holding that up in the light of serious thought, take our bearings likewise, and find out whether our conscience is still pointing true to Christ, its proper direction and aim. That is one of the uses to which we can apply our Sabbath leisure, and our occasional hours of private meditation and devotion. That is testing our compass. And if at any time we discover that our sense of duty or right is being warped from the straight line of fidelity to Christ, our first obligation is to put those inclinations or interests which are tending to warp it into a subordinate place in our hearts, thrusting them away where it will be less possible for them to exert their baleful power.

## 4. IT MUST BE TRUSTED.

Another point is, that the conscience be *trusted*. What I mean is this : in so far as

# The Higher Powers of the Soul

we feel our conscience to be awake, enlightened, and, tested in the light of Christ, to be true, we should fling ourselves honestly on its guidance. We should *believe in* our conscience when it speaks clearly within us. There is a sort of instinct which tells us when it is speaking clearly. And were we only to accept and follow its dictates when that instinct assures us of their truth, we should be armed with an amazing confidence and strength. That person who trusts his conscience, and throws his will out to act on its promptings, is lifted to a height of feeling which is one of the most precious experiences in life. Nothing yields a purer, richer satisfaction. To have a conscience kept enlightened by the life and teaching of the Lord Jesus, and to trust its leading loyally, with that same Lord ever in view—that may cost many a struggle with earthly inclination and selfish desire ; yet it is an infallible secret of that inward peace for which all so passionately yearn. It renders the haunting horrors of guilty memories impossible. It lays the spectres of terror and fear. It stirs

## The Treatment of Conscience

the upholding sense of being in the sure path to all that is best and most worth possessing at last.

If, then, we have any genuine reverence for the redeeming Christ, and would gain the real good of life, we are bound to commit our way to the bidding of that mysterious "Dweller in the Innermost," the witness for the Divine within our breast, and "exercise" ourselves "always to have a conscience void of offence toward God and toward men." That will open the soul to the sunshine of heaven, and to the brightening sweetness of the Father's smile. And as for the future—"a good conscience" before God can meet that with unshrinking trust.



## II.

### THE SANCTIFICATION OF REASON.



## II.

### THE SANCTIFICATION OF REASON.

“ They came to Thessalonica, where was a synagogue of the Jews ; and Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them, and three Sabbath days reasoned with them out of the Scriptures.”—Acts xvii. 1, 2.

It is an impressive spectacle—and it becomes more impressive as we take time to consider it—to see one man facing a group or an assembly of his fellow-men, and endeavouring to change their convictions, and thereby shape their conduct. For what is it that we witness going on there ? It is the subtle, mystic action of mind upon mind in virtue of a marvellous gift possessed in common by speaker and hearers—the God-like gift of reason. When Paul stood up in the synagogue at Thessalonica or elsewhere, and sought to win acceptance for the beliefs

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he held, he was bringing his own reason to bear on the reason of those listening to him. He took for granted that the same gift of reason which belonged to himself was also in the possession of every one before him, and therefore he appealed to it, and worked upon it, in the hope that he might lead his audience round to his point of view, and persuade them to see the matters he spoke of as he saw them.

This gift of reason is an essential part of our human nature, and its exercise is called for, more or less, in every detail of our daily transactions. If our work is to be of any avail, or our efforts to come to any good, we must think and put things together ; we must know what we are doing or intend to do ; we must consider how we are to lay out our time and deal with the affairs that demand our attention. There is not a day we can pass, nor a step we can take, without having our reason thus summoned into action ; and apart from the exercise of reason life would be a tangle of confusion,—a blind, aimless, baffling business.



## The Sanctification of Reason

It is of supreme moment, therefore, that a faculty which enters so incessantly into all our doings should be brought, and kept, under the control of the highest motives. And to secure this result is one of the distinctive aims of the Christian Gospel. There have been periods in history when the notion was entertained that religion represses reason, and that reason is antagonistic to religion. That notion has now been exploded. It has been proved that religion, if it is to have any profound and lasting effect, must address itself to the reason as well as to the other capacities of the mind of man. It has been proved that religion, the religion of Jesus Christ, welcomes the exercise of reason, that it quickens and develops the reason by the very grandeur of the truths it reveals, and, moreover, that it gives the reason a loftier direction by the high and earnest spirit it enkindles. Plain men and women have had their intelligence strengthened in grasp and widened in range by the influence which Christ and His Gospel have exerted upon them.

That is the sanctification of reason ; and

# The Higher Powers of the Soul

it is urgently required. For reason is in danger of being perverted to unworthy uses by the clamorous greeds and selfish passions that are for ever pressing their claims. And if this sublime faculty is to be turned to its best account, it can only be when it is governed by the sacred promptings and aspirations of a sincere religious faith. Then only can it be safely trusted as a guide in the great concerns of life.

## I. THE INTERPRETATION OF FACTS.

Keeping this in view, consider, in the first place, the part which reason plays in *the Interpretation of Facts*. It is the function of reason to pierce below the surface and find out the explanations of things. Through reason, searching and inquiring, the sciences have been carried to the stage of advance they have reached. It is through the exercise of reason that men have discovered how the rocks were built up, and hills and valleys formed,—how the varied species of plants and animals have grown and spread, how the

# The Sanctification of Reason

stars are wheeled in their orbits, and the mysterious comets guided in their vast and far-travelled course. The whole world of Nature has been robed in richer glory for us, because reason has so far interpreted its visible facts and traced the laws and forces that work behind them. And that great achievement is not unfavourable to religion, as many for a while feared. It has furnished larger scope for the wonder and adoration of the reverent soul, and given men new conceptions of the might and majesty of the Creator.

Then there is the stirring world of Human Life, in which we are all mixed up. Everything that happens there also has a meaning deeper than appears on the surface. And one of the foremost essentials to our good is the ability to interpret the facts of our own experience, and see the meaning that lies beneath. Some of those facts baffle us. There are crosses and trials which are beyond our power, for the time at least, to explain. Their design or purpose is veiled in mystery. Yet, if we can wait and trust, some day

# The Higher Powers of the Soul

perhaps, when devoutly pondering over what we have come through, our reason may be surprised by a flash of illumination, and we shall see. Many of the uses and meanings of the divine dealings are only discernible in the clearer after-light of retrospect, not in the dark, agitating season of actual experience. As in the case of Moses at Sinai, anxious to understand the drift of the divine designs (Exodus xxxiii. 21-23), so with us also ;—often it is only from behind, and after God in His sterner dealings has passed by, that we discover the explanation of His ways which we pine so wistfully to know. And although the explanation is not reached till the severe ordeal has passed, still it is to reason that the explanation is revealed,—to reason devoutly searching and inquiring into the hidden purpose of the Lord ; and when it is revealed, it becomes a source of strength and encouragement for other ordeals that may yet have to be undergone.

Moreover, there are the facts of our material position, the circumstances amid which we have to move and act. Unless we

## The Sanctification of Reason

can in some measure understand these, and discern the line of duty to which they point, we are sadly crippled. In this matter all depends on the spirit and motives by which our reason is swayed. It is a familiar saying that the eye sees only what it brings with it the power of seeing. And so it is with the mind likewise. "The wish is father to the thought"; and as a rule the mind finds in the circumstances it has to deal with just what it is prepared by its own disposition to find. Thus, many a time, the difficulties which to one person are a depressing hindrance and a ground of complaint, are to another a stimulus to more courageous effort, or to greater patience and firmness of resolve. In such a case there is a difference in the way of reading the meaning of facts. And that is due to a difference in the spirit by which the reason is impelled. If the reason is actuated by self-caring, self-saving desires, it will interpret everything by the standard of selfish ease, and the life consequently will be a poor, shifty affair. But if, behind reason, there be a nobler impulse at work, a

# The Higher Powers of the Soul

sense of responsibility to God and truth, then the interpretation arrived at will be like a bracing trumpet-call to the soul, and the harder tasks, which make others shrink, will shine with the glow of divinely-given opportunities. And that is a secret of richest blessing.

## 2. THE JUDGMENT OF VALUES.

A second function of reason consists in *the Judgment of Values*. Amid the multitude of objects that surround us here on earth it is absolutely necessary to make some choice as to those which are best entitled to claim our interest and engage our energies. To plunge into life haphazard, and grasp blindly the glittering attractions that thrust themselves upon us, would be to court disaster. But we are dowered with the gift of reason that we may compare things, and form an estimate of their worth and of their bearing on our happiness, and act accordingly. To bring reason thus into exercise is an imperative obligation if our true well-being is

## The Sanctification of Reason

to be consulted. For "all that glitters is not gold"; and many things wear a shining glamour which is hollow and delusive. We need to judge wisely, therefore, if we are not to be ensnared to our injury. Our reason must be brought to bear on gauging and estimating the objects that compete for our regard. But it must be reason purified in its aim by reverence for the truth and mind of Christ,—reason looking to Christ for its standard of valuation, trying to see things with His eyes, and in the light He sheds. Only thus is it possible to distinguish between what is really important to our highest interests, and what is of slighter account, between what is worthy of the heart's devotion and what is transient and vain.

And nothing has a more direct influence on our life's true good than the decisions we thus form. All that is most vital to us hangs on the choice we make as to the things on which the ardour of our ambition is to be set. A mistake here means ultimate blight to our hopes of genuine satisfaction. If the reason is not sanctified by the power of

# The Higher Powers of the Soul

earnest motives, the glare of the alluring and the showy will be apt to dazzle, and lead it astray. Then, too, there will be the risk of accepting conventional valuations, and timidly following the superficial judgments of fashion or the prevailing popular taste. That is slavery, and it may mean beggary of soul and happiness ere all is done.

There is no safeguard amid the manifold allurements of life, but a reason governed by a devout reverence for Christ's standard of worth. Then that God-given faculty becomes an incalculable help. It enables us to distinguish the solid substance from the empty sham, the real good from the counterfeit, the reward which is worth any sacrifice to gain from the reward that curses as soon as it is grasped.

### 3. THE ADAPTATION OF MEANS TO ENDS.

A third function of reason is *the Adaptation of Means to Ends*. Of what reason has accomplished in this direction we have numberless illustrations on every hand. The machinery that drives our factories and



# The Sanctification of Reason

keeps our industries going, the means of locomotion on land and sea, the appliances for rapid communication across the earth and through the air, our political organisations and public institutions—are all the inventions of reason, planning and devising to attain certain results in the sphere of material and social affairs.

But there is scope and need for applying the same power of planning and devising in the management of individual life. Many a person stumbles sadly and misses much that is dear to his heart and hopes, because there is some defect in his manner of employing his reason to secure the end he desires. You may set your heart on a true and worthy object, but in order to reach it you must contrive and use the appropriate means. Your line of conduct must be adapted to the result at which you aim. If you want the glow of high thought as a source of satisfying happiness, you must nourish your mind by communing with the great thinkers who have poured out their inspiring thoughts in their books. If you want to attain the

## The Higher Powers of the Soul

deep peace of a clean conscience, you must take such measures as you can to avoid occasions of temptation, and to protect yourself against what you know to be your besetting weakness. If it is worth of soul to which you aspire, and you wish to possess an inward wealth which shall be a treasure to you, whatever your outward fortunes, you must bend your reason to find out and follow the ways of living and acting which Christ guides you to employ. You must endeavour to discover what principles of behaviour, what practices of devotion and of fellowship with the unseen, are best fitted to cultivate the dispositions and feelings that make the spirit rich within. And if you are alive to the eternal issues of life and long to have your destiny beyond the grave secured, you must deliberately order your course of conduct on a plan that is calculated to lead to a result so grand.

It is all a question of adaptation, the devising and employment of means suited to accomplish a definite end. And just here it is, in those matters of transcendent moment,

## The Sanctification of Reason

that failures often occur. It is lamentable to see the slipshod fashion of managing their religious life which some people display. They have high enough aims and a certain degree of spiritual desire, but they have no method or order, no intelligent arrangement of their habits and their time, with a view to promoting the objects they profess. They take their seasons of worship and their religious devotions by fits and starts. They trifle with ensnaring distractions, though secretly aware that these spoil their relish for sacred things. They leave the feeding of their souls and the quickening of their spiritual feelings very much to chance.

In all this there is a failure to apply the reason seriously to the most solemn concerns with which men and women have to do. For reason, if consulted in the light of Christ, would show that such blessings as peace of conscience, elevation of soul, inward wealth and preparation for immortality, cannot be gained by the careless, random ways of acting with which those persons are inclined to be content. Common sense would tell them

## The Higher Powers of the Soul

that the means they take are not at all adapted to the end required. And indeed a sanctified common sense is one of the best helps that can be possessed in the right ordering of life. It is simply reason imbued with a sacred purpose and a spirit of reverence for Christ and Christlike things. And when reason is thus graciously influenced it becomes a faculty of spiritual insight, and is beyond price in the working out of our highest weal. It gives sagacity and prudence in the regulation of conduct, and prevents thoughtless tamperings with moral risks. It gives tact and discretion in the wise performance of duty, and saves the good a person has from being evil spoken of. It keeps the soul in trim for embracing opportunities of progress and usefulness. It steadies the bent of the life on one lofty aim, and thereby makes it possible to go from strength to strength, growing in grace, and doing ever better service for the Lord. And thus the Godlike gift implanted in us becomes more Godlike still, when hallowed by a Godlike purpose and devoted to Godlike ends.

### III.

## THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF MEMORY.



### III.

## THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF MEMORY.

“Thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God hath led thee.”—DEUT. viii. 2.

THE power to remember is quite as familiar to us as the power to touch or the power to see. Indeed, so familiar is it that we are apt to take it as a matter of course and scarcely realise how immensely indebted to it we are in all we do.

Memory is one of the most astonishing of our manifold endowments. It is that capacity which the mind possesses to treasure up what it has gone through, what it has felt and seen, and to keep it in reserve for future use. It is the capacity for retaining the information we acquire, the impressions we receive, and without it we could never grow in knowledge, nor derive any advantage from the

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sights and events we have witnessed. In short, were it not for memory, seizing hold of each hour's and each year's occurrences, and storing them away within, to be called forth again (more or less clearly) from time to time, we should continue in a state of intellectual babyhood to the end of our days.

Memory, then, preserves the past for us. It enables us to bind the past to the present, and thus to bring the light of the past to bear on the present and on the management of its affairs.

The possession of such a power involves necessarily a tremendous responsibility. In some cases the memory is specially susceptible. It registers events and impressions with great celerity and ease. In other cases, though the memory may not be so quickly receptive, its retentiveness of what it does receive may be extraordinary. In fact, many of those who have studied the science of the mind assure us that nothing which has once been taken into the memory can ever be altogether effaced, but is kept locked up in secret cells, and certain to emerge and spring



# The Responsibilities of Memory

into consciousness some time or other. Marvellous indeed, and often startling, are the revivals of long-past things which were deemed to be left for ever behind, dead and buried. A chance word, the sight of a face, a waft of music, the scent of a flower, may set in motion a train of associations, and suddenly, spontaneously, the long-buried thing of the past wakes up and leaps into life again, fresh and vivid.

Memory, however, does not always yield up its stores with such spontaneous readiness. There are times when it is only by an effort of will that the past can be recalled and made to live again. And it is to the putting forth of this effort that the text chosen from the old Hebrew Scripture urges. Yes ; but what part of our past is it which it is most important to recall and to cherish in remembrance? That is the decisive point. That determines the value of memory to us, for the present and for the future. It is for what we deliberately *try* to recall and are most anxious to cherish in remembrance that we are responsible.

# The Higher Powers of the Soul

## I. THE DEEPENING OF REVERENCE AND GRATITUDE.

That being the case, then, it follows, first of all, that those recollections should be cherished that *tend to deepen reverence and gratitude*. This was the drift of the teacher of ancient Israel when he said, "Thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God hath led thee." He desired the people to summon up the remembrance of what Jehovah had done for them, that they might be impressed with a sense of His greatness and feel the magnitude of their obligations to Him. And there are passages in the lives of all of us which, if recalled and dwelt upon, are fitted to produce a similar effect upon our mind. We have seen much of the divine dealings in the past that should strike us with wonder and awe in presence of the infinite majesty and power that gird us round on every hand. But we must rouse ourselves to consider what we have seen, to bring it back to thought again and again, in order that the wonder and awe

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may be stirred, and kept stirring, within us. That is how our reverence for the highest can alone be maintained, and it is our duty thus, by the exercise of memory, to endeavour to maintain it.

It is also the way to foster the spirit of gratitude. In a French school for deaf and dumb boys, taught by the Abbé Sicard many years ago, one of the pupils was asked to state what he understood by the word "gratitude"; and immediately he wrote down, "Gratitude is the memory of the heart." A better answer could scarcely be given. For it is the willingness to remember the good received in days gone by, the help that came under dreary burdens, the glimpses of divine mercy that beamed out when the path was clouded,—it is the willingness to remember these things and ponder them seriously that warms and intensifies the grateful feeling. The past may have had its ruggedness and trial, its struggle and its gloom; and some may be disposed to brood darkly over such aspects of its sternness. But the past had its bounties and benefits,

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and its seasons of brightness too, and these should never be dropped out of sight as if they had not been. To forget the streaks of sunshine that so often softened the shadows, would be sheer unfaithfulness. And we are neither fair to God nor fair to ourselves if the sunnier side of our life is not held in remembrance.

## 2. THE TEACHING OF PRACTICAL WISDOM.

In the second place, those recollections should be cherished that *teach lessons of practical wisdom*. It is through the aid of memory that many of the best elements of our education are acquired. In passing from one phase of our existence to another we meet with a variety of persons and circumstances, and we are moved by a variety of thoughts and feelings; and as memory gathers these together in its stores we can learn much for the right guidance of our conduct. We can draw hints and rules of action from what memory has preserved in its records—from the good deeds we have

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ever done, the noble examples we have heard of, or the mistakes we have made, the difficulties we have encountered, and even the failures into which we have stumbled.

Thus it is that we gain benefit from the school of experience. If we consider the facts which memory can set in array before us, we get an insight into many questions which directly affect our happiness,—such questions, for instance, as, what are the real sources of satisfaction, and the objects most worth striving for? What are the dangers to be shunned, and the principles of conduct best calculated to secure the welfare of the soul and the peace of the conscience? With regard to these questions every person's experience affords the means of gathering some definite instruction which memory can retain for use in the grave business of life.

And the point to be laid to heart is this,—that if the wise lessons of experience are ignored and the memory of them be muffled and stifled, there is a deplorable failure in responsibility. That person violates one of the most solemn of all obligations who

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pushes from him, or refuses to consider, what memory teaches. He does wrong to his own nature ; he spoils the best possibilities of his life, he defeats the purpose of God in conferring such an endowment as memory upon him. For memory is designed to provide every man with lights of wisdom from the experiences he has undergone, so that at each new stage of his course he may see more clearly where the true good lies, and be enabled thereby to act and strive with more certainty of attaining it.

## 3. THE FOSTERING OF HIGHER IDEALS.

Again, those recollections should be cherished which *furnish ideals of loftier endeavour*. Probably we have all had our times of generous enthusiasm, when we thought of the high line of action we should like to take, and we resolved, if spared, by and by to take it. At such times we caught a glimpse of the true direction in which our aspiration should be bent, the excellence of life and character we should aim to reach. Our

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hearts were warmed and uplifted, and we vowed to ourselves to play the worthy part which our generous moods suggested.

Do we try now to preserve our grasp on those higher resolutions? Do we find a freshening interest in calling them up and thinking over the circumstances that gave them birth, that we may be incited to greater devotedness in our present efforts? That is one of the functions for which the gift of memory was bestowed. It was meant as an aid in keeping hold of our best ideals, and in carrying them forward with us from day to day and year to year, that so their beauty might continue to inspire us, and that we might be impelled to work them out and translate them into reality.

Pitiful is the case of those who once had bright and noble ideals, and sincere resolutions to follow them, but have allowed those ideals to drop into oblivion, and are quite content to leave them unremembered. Such persons may prosper fairly well in many surface ways, yet they have lost the high stimulating purpose that would have led

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their life on to sterling worth and usefulness. And they have burdened themselves with a stupendous responsibility. For, to have once seen and felt a particular line of action to be right and high, and demanded by the conscience, is to be bound henceforth to strain as far as possible to follow it. And if it is not followed, if the very remembrance of the impulse to follow it is smothered, then the life must fall miserably short of that which God meant it to be.

Blessed are those who are anxious to retain their grip on the highest thoughts and the highest conceptions of good which have once flashed upon their vision,—who hold fast the most sacred resolutions of the past, to exalt their aims and shape their endeavours for the present. Such persons press memory into the service of their spiritual sanctification.

## 4. THE STRENGTHENING OF COURAGE AND FAITH.

Once more those recollections should be cherished which *help to nurse moral courage*



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*and faith.* Tennyson in "Locksley Hall," echoing the idea of an older poet, declared—

"That a sorrow's crown of sorrow is remembering happier things."

But Tennyson was in his youth when he penned that statement. In after years, when he had seen and learned more of life, he discovered—as is shown in "In Memoriam"—that sorrow can be relieved, and relieved amazingly, by the remembrance of happier things. Bruised hearts without number have found solace and strength unspeakable in casting the thoughts away back to sunny spots in the past on which it is soothing to dwell. The Land of Memory may be shadowed here and there by heavy regrets ; but it has its pleasant places also, not a few, lit up by the radiance of kindly providences and countless mercies, that gladdened and blessed ; and to let the mind wander amongst these is to enjoy a refuge from pressing vexations and griefs. Often, indeed, in hours of despondency and wasting care, men and women obtain a wondrous comfort in taking a stroll

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in thought through the country of "Auld Lang Syne." It gives them a respite from their troubled feelings to be thus transported to the happy scenes and genial delights of brighter days they once knew.

And it does more ; it braces the soul to confidence too. For the retrospect of past blessings supplies ground for the assurance that the same goodness which bestowed those blessings, rules and reigns still, and that the coming days may be bright with mercies as former days have been. And that assurance is confirmed when the love of the cross is brought into view, and when the pathway of life is looked at in the glow of hope it sheds. Then courage revives—courage, and a firmer faith. In the light of the cross and its burning love, it becomes refreshingly clear that the gifts of divine goodness are never exhausted, and that the heart of the Father, which the cross reveals, has more kindness yet to show as the years roll by.

It is vital to our happiness and to all that is most precious for us in life that we cherish the remembrances of the past which

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strengthen faith. Thus the spirit can front whatever is yet to come, nerved with the confidence that goodness and mercy are waiting for us along the path, ready to meet us again as we step forward.

Think often, and think much, of the gleams of joy with which the past was illumined. They were not given to be slighted and left forgotten; and it is to his lasting detriment that any one permits himself to slight or forget them. Call them up to your recollection when the spirit is bruised or burdened, and find in them a warrant for the brave trust that the God who has brightened your lot with smiles in former days will lift up the light of his countenance upon you again, and will never suffer you to be overwhelmed in darkness.



IV.

THE HIGHER USES OF THE  
IMAGINATION.



## IV.

### THE HIGHER USES OF THE IMAGINATION.

“ Another parable put He forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is likened unto . . . ”—MATT. xiii. 24.

“ All these things spake Jesus unto the multitude in parables ; and without a parable spake He not unto them.”  
—MATT. xiii. 34.

A CONSPICUOUS feature in the teaching of Jesus was the extent to which He dealt in parables. Sometimes those parables were very brief. He would take some little incident with which everybody was familiar, and turn it into a figure to shadow forth the idea He wished to convey. At other times He would frame a story, and hold attention riveted as He described the doings or experiences of the persons brought into view ; and He did this in a style so graphic and simple that everything seemed to live and move before people's eyes.

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In these stories there was always some hidden meaning wrapped up which He meant those listening to Him to find out and apply for themselves. The lesson He desired to teach might be rather unpalatable ; or it might seem too tame if presented in bare, prosaic words. And so He sought to flash it on the mind in the form of a picture which His hearers could carry with them, and think over, until its deeper suggestions dawned upon them and they felt its force.

Now, what was all this but an appeal to the imagination? It was an effort to work on that remarkable gift the human soul has—the gift of seeing in things visible and tangible the hints and emblems of things that are higher. It is through this gift of imagination that we are able to rise above the dull surroundings of life, and form conceptions of what is grand and inspiring. It is by the gift of imagination that we can make what we actually know the means of realising and rendering clear to ourselves the vague ideas we are dimly straining to grasp.

Some have asserted in recent years that



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this is a vanishing gift—that the power of imagination is on the wane in the present generation. Whether that be the case or not, one thing at least is patent—that many are inclined to speak disparagingly of the influence of the imagination. They think that to give it much play unfits a person for the practical demands of life. It renders the mind impatient of the matter-of-fact details of work-a-day existence. And not a few are particularly afraid of the effect of imagination in religion. It makes visionaries and dreamy sentimentalists, they declare. It carries people away from the simple realities of the faith, and tempts them to indulge in vagaries and fancies of their own invention.

Yet here is the fact staring us in the face that Jesus devoted a large part of His teaching to the wakening up of the imagination ; and He was neither a sentimentalist nor a visionary, but seriously practical. He drew striking analogies and told tales of moving interest which set the imagination to work. He wanted to fill men's minds with pictures drawn from the natural course of things,

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pictures which might rouse them to think of likenesses and correspondences to other things that did not appear on the surface. Obviously, He placed great confidence in the power of the imagination to enlarge the range of men's perceptions, and to lift them to heights of thought and feeling which they could not otherwise reach.

There can be no doubt that imagination is a divinely given endowment of the soul, designed to serve divinely-appointed ends; and this clearly was Jesus' conviction. It may be prostituted, turned to ends that are unworthy, as any other endowment may be. Nevertheless it has its higher uses in the wise purpose of God, and when earnestly employed for those higher uses it is sure to prove an inestimable good.

## I. THE POWER OF VISUALISING.

One important use of the imagination is to hold stirring scenes of life before the mind in a way that shall be vivid and arresting. This probably is the simplest form in which

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the imagination can be exercised. When we read or hear an account of any notable action, we have all of us a certain power to call up the vision of it in our mental eye. We can so conceive the persons, the places, and the deeds done, that the whole scene becomes living to us. We seem to see it ; we catch the spirit of it : the impression of its heroism, high faith, or self-devotion darts upon us and thrills us.

This is one of the benefits which imagination enables us to derive from books of travel, from books of biography and history. It enriches the chambers of our thought with pictures of daring or nobleness, of generosity or sacrifice, of resolute struggle against oppression and wrong ; and it makes these pictures living, full of interest, and full also of uplifting suggestions that stimulate our better feelings. Thus we can see Savonarola mounting the scaffold and calmly facing the crowd he had laboured to lead to righteousness and God ; and our hearts throb as we feel the spell of his courageous fidelity. We can see Luther, baited and brow-beaten by

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the assembled magnates at Worms, yet calmly declaring his refusal to recant ; and our pulse beats fast as we mark his unflinching steadfastness. We can see Mungo Park, in his hour of despair, bending over the tuft of moss in the lone African wilds, and drawing from it the assurance that a divine care was guarding him still ; and a fresh breath of hope swells our own bosom. It is as if we had been there, spectators on the spot, witnesses of the whole transaction.

Such is the power which imagination supplies. And it is a power worth cultivating. Provided we withhold its exercise from everything low or coarse, and deliberately engage it on what is elevating and pure, it can be of immense service in numberless ways. It is an unspeakable help, for instance, when we bring its influence to bear on the events and incidents of the Gospel narrative. What a new zest we find in the life and doings of the Lord Jesus when we call up before the mind's view the varied scenes of which that narrative tells ! It is the imagination that enables us to do this.

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It enables us to picture to ourselves the very figure of the Master as He spoke and acted and moved about amongst men. We *visualise* the description. The quiet hills of Galilee and the busy lake-shore, the tree-shaded streets of Jericho, the wooded slopes of Olivet, the crowded temple-courts of Jerusalem, the tragic cross on Calvary,—all rise clear to our mental gaze as we read the sacred story; and the gracious Form of Jesus stands out vivid to us as if we actually looked upon His face. And thus the Person of the Lord grows real to our apprehension. We feel the wonder and the beauty of His actions. We enter into their spirit and purpose. He becomes to us a living Presence, wooing and touching our hearts. And it is by the aid of imagination that this inspiring effect is wrought.

## 2. THE GRASPING OF THE SPIRITUAL.

A second use of the imagination is to give shape and colour to great spiritual truths. It has often been said that everything in

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life is double. As Shelley has expressed it,—

“Nothing in the world is single ;  
All things by a law divine  
In one another’s being mingle.”

And that is veritably true. Everything that is visible and material bears in it a correspondence or resemblance to something else in a more mysterious realm of being. In all that the senses perceive going on around us there are hidden symbols and images of things which the senses cannot grasp. What is seen does not stand by itself, nor does it exist for itself ;—it is always the type or sign of something that is not seen and higher than itself. Hence the world is crammed full of analogies, emblematic figures, that shadow forth invisible realities, too grand to be put into plain ordinary speech.

And to discover these analogies, to lay hold of them and keep them before the mind, is the function of the imagination. It is a splendid thing to grasp a great truth or a noble thought, and to be able to link it

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on to some palpable circumstance in life with which you are familiar. Then the palpable, familiar circumstance becomes to you the image or symbol of that great thought or truth. It gives it body and form and colour, and makes the thought or truth itself more intensely vivid to your heart and feeling. When, for example, the Psalmist caught hold of the idea of the divine faithful guidance and guardianship in the events of his experience, what an enormous help to his inward comfort it must have been when he found he could link on that idea to the homely incidents of the shepherd's calling which he knew so well, and say, "The Lord is *my* Shepherd!" Henceforth he could never see the herdsman on the hills, leading his flock, without having the reality of the divine care made more clear and comprehensible to his soul.

That is but one illustration among many of the power of the imagination to seize upon comparisons and analogies drawn from earthly things and scenes, and so give body and colour to high truths which otherwise

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would be vague and dim. It was to kindle the imagination and assist it in doing this that Jesus dealt in parables so largely. "Earth," as one of the poets has said, "is the shadow of heaven," and imagination is granted that we may use it to find in the sights and occurrences of earth the figures and pictures of heavenly ideas, which are true for all time and vital to our happiness.

## 3. THE REDEEMING OF THE COMMONPLACE.

This leads on to a third use of the imagination, and that is—to irradiate the commonplace with the glow of lofty meanings. Wordsworth speaks of the power of the poet to illumine the common affairs of life by the magical gift he possesses. He can

"Add the gleam,  
The light that never was on sea or land,"

to brighten up the most prosaic sights and objects around him. And we have all a little of the poet in us, because we all have a little of the same magical gift of imagina-



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tion. And this gift may be turned to priceless service if we bring the sacred revelations of religion to bear upon its exercise. For those revelations convey the assurance of a real divine purpose working itself out in the common round of every one's tasks and cares, a divine purpose even in the most monotonous daily grind. And to grasp that conception, and realise that in your hum-drum circumstances and duties you have some end to fulfil worth God's placing you there — to grasp that, and hold it steadily in your mind, sheds a radiance on your lot and on your honest efforts which is marvellously brightening. It lights up your commonplace toil and struggle with high and wondrous meanings. It connects the flat routine of your days with the vast scheme of the Almighty. It is like a halo of sacredness thrown round your life.

Yield your imagination to the Spirit's quickening touch, and you will see the halo. Try to see it; and when it flashes on you, never lose sight of it; keep it in view steady and clear. And in many a despondent

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hour, when your way is dull and dark, the gleam of some divine end you are serving will light up the drudgery of your lot, and revive and strengthen your heart.

## 4. THE VISION OF THE IDEAL.

A fourth use of the imagination is to spur the mind by the vision of attainments not yet reached. For imagination has a remarkable capacity for stretching away from the present to the future, from the actual to the ideal. It is through the exercise of the imagination that a man conceives to himself the advancement in his position, the extension of his business, the improvement of his methods and machinery, the increase of his knowledge and culture, which may be possible for him, and minister to his success. In the silent chambers within he sketches and paints it, until he sees it all shining before his mental eye. And as he sees it, his ambition is whetted ; and unless he be a mere builder of castles in the air, he rouses his will and energies to work forward, as far as he can,

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towards realising what he sees. Imagination has furnished him with the vision of an ideal, and that spurs him on.

But imagination may be used to stir the mind by the charm of a far higher vision. It may be used to picture the nobleness of a brave, devoted, Christ-like life. That was what the Apostle meant when he prayed on behalf of the Ephesians that "Christ might dwell in their hearts by faith" (Eph. iii. 17). He was thinking of the image of Christ kept gleaming before their inward gaze, to draw them onwards to close resemblance to the Saviour's beauty and grace.

And there is a great secret here—the secret of making the best of life and its precious possibilities. To have the mind's eye filled with a vision of the good and brave things we may do, the lofty aims for which we may strive, the self-denying battle we may fight for Christ and conscience' sake—how that kindles aspiration and sets the soul straining towards purer heights and better things! Let a man cherish every such vision when it flashes upon him; let his

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imagination seize it and hold it floating before his view ; then he will have the grandest of all ideals to give his life its true bent, and to urge him on to the nobleness and spiritual worth which Christ lived and suffered to help him to reach.

V.

THE INSPIRATIONAL FORCE OF  
FAITH AND HOPE.



## V.

### THE INSPIRATIONAL FORCE OF FAITH AND HOPE.

“That your faith and hope might be in God.”—  
1 PETER i. 21.

FAITH and Hope are often brought into close conjunction in the New Testament Scriptures ; and they are usually found together in the real experience of life. The reason is, that they are two forms of the soul's endowment which are most intimately allied, and which, therefore, are ever ready to blend with each other, and support each other's activity.

They carry with them a virtue which is always welcome, to produce a widening of the mental horizon, a freshening of interest, a heightening of the zest of existence. This is especially the case when Faith and Hope are wakened into exercise by the revelation

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given in Jesus Christ of the grace and goodness of God, and when they are kept alive by the breath of the Spirit Divine. Then Faith becomes gifted with a singular capacity of spiritual vision. It catches glimpses of the higher meaning of things, of the grandeur of the divine purpose, the certainty that Eternal Love rules and reigns, and that, in spite of all the tangled confusion of the world, the reality of that Love will at last be made clear. Then Hope, too, gains an unwonted power to glance forward into the future, and see the Eternal Love working on in front, preparing good in the midst of opposing evil, and opening the path through danger and darkness to victory and peace.

## I. FAITH AND HOPE ARE TRANSFIGURING.

They bring the radiance of a higher realm to bear on the dull, dry details of life's dusty ways, and gild them with brighter hues than ever they previously wore. The most humdrum work becomes sacred when that radiance falls upon it. The faith that holds



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the goodness and wisdom of God as a treasured conviction sees the drab, grey things of daily experience suffused with colours fairer than ordinary eyes can perceive. Indeed, were it not for this transfiguring vision of Faith, how dingy and empty much that we pass through from day to day would seem ! It is faith which enables us to discern the possible good lying hidden beneath the prosaic grind and drudgery, the possible gain to be reaped through the strenuous grapple with difficulties and discouragements. Faith illumines even the dreary incidents of life by detecting in them the gleam of something precious enshrined within. This, as Tennyson reminds us, is the mystic power of Faith :—

“She sees the Best that glimmers through the Worst,  
She feels the Sun is hid but for a night,  
She spies the Summer through the Winter’s bud,  
She tastes the fruit before the blossom falls,  
She hears the lark within the songless egg,  
She finds the fountain where they wailed ‘Mirage.’”

In short, Faith sees things in the light of God’s goodness, guaranteed by the cross and

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by the Saviour's risen life, and in that light hidden possibilities begin to shine out where all before seemed purposeless and vain.

And Hope also has a transfiguring power. Hope casts the radiance of promise over the mists and shadows of coming days. When hope, kindled by the divine love in Christ, springs up in the heart, how wondrously sunny is the glow that falls on all around and on all our forward way ! The aspect of the world and its affairs changes to us then. Hard and trying things are brightened, and the cheerier outlook tinges the present stress and struggle with a softer hue.

“Hope is the rainbow to the storms of life,  
The evening beam that smiles the clouds away,  
And tints to-morrow with prophetic day.”

## 2. FAITH AND HOPE ARE STIMULATING.

They act as an incentive to high endeavour. For the moment we grasp the nobler possibilities of life and catch the sunny gleam of promise on the days in front—that moment we feel spurred to put forth our energies. The will is invigorated ; we are roused to do

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and dare. All the best work ever done in the world has been done under the instigation of Faith and Hope. And the Faith and Hope that draw their strength from God have fired men and women with a decision and plodding tenacity of purpose which made them capable of the heaviest tasks.

And what a power of patient endurance Faith and Hope can impart to the soul ! In many a case the wrestle with trouble and personal infirmity is long and sore ; yet the earnest wrestler is enabled to fight on and wait—wait and trust—because of the inner assurance of victory and the warrant given by the glorified Christ that God is on his side. That is the infallible support for us all. In dark days, days of sad inward struggle, that assurance is the grand stimulus we have to keep our souls in patience and brace us to endure.

“The heavenward gaze of souls sublime  
At once transcends and conquers time.”

And then, as for courage, there is no more potent stimulus than Faith and Hope

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“in God” to make men brave. It tightens up all the fibres of the spirit to feel sure of the Everlasting Goodness and the gracious purpose of the Everlasting Will. Such an assurance stirs to heroisms in duty which lift common human nature to the loftiest levels of moral dignity and worth ; and what terrible ordeals it can nerve men to face with calm daring and unflinching heart, history has many splendid examples to show. When Luther was pressing forward his work of Reformation, and several of the German dukes and princes were declaring themselves in his favour, a cardinal legate was sent from Rome to deal with him and crush him into silence. “The Pope’s little finger,” said the haughty Church dignitary, “is stronger than all Germany. Do you expect your princes to take up arms to defend *you*—*you*, a wretched worm like you ? I tell you, No ! and where will you be then ?”

“Then, as now,” was Luther’s quiet reply, “in the hands of Almighty God.”

Thus spoke out the courageous soul. And thousands in all ranks and grades of

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life have been roused to brave danger with a similar courage, because they also vividly believed themselves sustained and guarded by the presence of the Invisible.

### 3. FAITH AND HOPE ARE CREATIVE.

What I mean is this : when a person is really alive to the possible good which the love of God has put within his reach, and when, with the vision of that possible good in his soul, he makes a genuine effort to reach it,—then gradually he works out the very conditions essential for reaching it. The hindrances may be great and the limitations of circumstance hampering ; yet it is simply amazing what Faith and Hope can do in enabling any one, not only to mould his circumstances to the bent of his will, but also to effect changes in his environment which further his purpose, and even to control for good the events that arise independent of his own wish or choice. It is possible by the power of Faith so to master the hard details of one's lot that they become

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stepping-stones to the fulfilment of one's higher ideals. Yes, and one can hope, and even in seeming defeat and bafflement can toil and labour in hope,

—“till Hope creates  
From its own wreck the thing it contemplates.”

Who does not know some instances in which a person's Faith and Hope have so worked upon his surroundings, and so modified and utilised them, that he has *made* them the means of gaining the good on which his aspirations were set? It is by the creative energies of Faith and Hope throbbing in the soul that such achievements are accomplished,—the creative energies stirred and vivified by yielding to the power of grace divine. Factors in our environment which we cannot alter, we may yet turn to use for worthy ends ; disadvantages in our circumstances which we cannot remove, we may so grapple with as to develop moral strength and gain an elevated freshening of soul. Everything depends on what we carry with us in our own inner life. That is why it is

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so important that our Faith and Hope should be in God ; for the quality and temper thereby inspired enlarge our inward resources, and prepare us in our deepest spirit for any experiences that may come.

Maurice Maeterlinck, the Belgian mystic, has a suggestive saying in one of his books —“None but yourself shall you meet on the highway of Fate” ; and it is wise to ponder seriously the truth which the words convey. “None but yourself shall you meet on the highway of Fate.” Yes ; the things that happen to us as we step along our path will prove friendly or unfriendly to our happiness just as we are inwardly qualified to make them. The good or the evil which may come through these things is not in the things themselves, but in the secret dispositions of our own mind and will. Their effect upon us is determined by the manner and spirit in which we take them. It is always what a person has and is *within himself* that creates the elements of blessing for him in the events and circumstances with which he has to deal. And nothing is so effectual

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in creating the real elements of blessing as the sacred energies begotten in the soul by reverent surrender to the Spirit of God. We may be inclined to fret and complain that the good of life is denied us, that our surroundings debar us from the satisfaction and exhilaration we long to feel. But our fretting and complaining only aggravate the trouble. The imperative need is to cast ourselves on the Father above and get wakened in us that Faith and Hope which shall give us power to use circumstances for the highest ends, and to convert our surroundings into helps for the enrichment of our hearts. That is the true moral victory, and through Faith and Hope we create the conditions for winning it.

## 4. FAITH AND HOPE ARE CONTAGIOUS.

Their influence passes from soul to soul. There is never a man or woman, cherishing a buoyant, trustful spirit, but is in some degree an inspirer of others. The weary and the heavy-laden receive somehow a new access of



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strength when such a man or woman is by. It is those who have a brave, bright confidence in the eternal goodness and love that hearten their fellows bearing the burden and battle around them. The common difficulty, felt almost everywhere, is the temptation to be discouraged. So hard is it to persevere amid disappointing obstructions and besetting infirmities, that the spirits are apt often to languish and faint. But in presence of some resolute soul, lit up with a sacred Faith and Hope, we are imbued with fresh ardour and the springs of high endeavour are set moving again. We feel stirred to nobler impulse in contact with those who are filled with strength and brightness derived from trust in the faithfulness of God. Our hearts are uplifted as their kindling influence touches us.

And they are the saviours and helpers of society, those spiritually brightened, strengthened souls. It is they who rouse to upward effort, and keep the better aspirations of their fellow-men alive. Wherever they come they bring the breath of reviving

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encouragement with them. These are the bright, strong souls who fulfil the mission so finely described in Matthew Arnold's memorable lines :—

“Beacons of hope, ye appear!  
Languor is not in your heart,  
Weakness is not in your word,  
Weariness not on your brow.  
. . . . . At your voice  
Panic, despair, flee away.  
Ye move through the ranks, recall  
The stragglers, refresh the outworn,  
Praise, reinspire the brave.  
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Ye fill up the gaps in our files,  
Strengthen the wavering line,  
Stablish, continue our march,  
On, to the bounds of the waste,  
On, to the City of God.”

Certainly it is a blessed service which Faith and Hope enable men and women to render to their brothers and sisters struggling forward on their pilgrimage to eternity. It is something worth living for, to be the means of brightening the hearts and helping the higher strivings of toiling, tempted, care-

## Inspirational Force

burdened humanity. And why should not every one desire and pray to have his own small share in the gracious privilege? Un-speakable blessing is theirs who, by the contagious influence of their Faith and Hope, can cheer others on in the upward path, and inspire others with freshened resolve to fight their battle and hold true to their own soul and to God.



VI.

THE DISCIPLINE OF THE WILL.



## VI.

### THE DISCIPLINE OF THE WILL.

“Ye will not come unto Me, that ye might have life.”  
—JOHN V. 40.

WHEN Tennyson said, in Enid’s song, that  
“Man is man, and master of his fate,”

he was but echoing a truth which Jesus here distinctly recognised,—the truth, namely, that each man is possessed of a separate independence, and has the carving of his course and the shaping of his destiny largely in his own hands.

In all the supreme concerns of existence this undoubtedly is the case. What a man makes of his life, the good or evil he works out in it, is determined mainly by the exercise of that inscrutable power in his being which we call the Will. On that the great

## The Higher Powers of the Soul

issues of weal or woe actually turn. Hence the emphasis laid by Jesus on the bent taken by the Will ;—"Ye *will* not come unto Me, that ye might have life."

For, deeper than everything else—down beneath conscience, reason, memory, faith and hope—lies the Will. It is the centre of each one's personality, the mysterious factor in each one's life ; and it is self-regulating and free. To be sure, heredity, environment, and early upbringing may so far affect its action and impose certain tendencies upon it. Yet, that these influences are not irresistible there is abundant evidence to show ; and the example of thousands has demonstrated that the will can still assert itself, and still retain its capacity for independent self-direction, even in face of cramping hostile conditions which appear calculated to hold it in hopeless thrall. This unquenchable freedom of the Will is, indeed, the ground on which personal responsibility is based ; and the conscience, as well as the common sense, of mankind has been constrained to acknowledge it.



# The Discipline of the Will

## I. DEFECTS.

There are certain *Defects*, however, under which the Will suffers, through the influence upon it which heredity, environment, or early training has wrought. These defects vary in different individuals, but in one form or other they are constantly forced on our attention.

In some, for example, the Will is *sluggish*. It is disinclined to the exertion required at the moment in facing the task that has to be met; disposed to put matters off till the mood or the season shall seem more congenial. Thus we have the easy-going, procrastinating Will, that keeps dallying with good intentions, yet lazily hangs back and postpones their fulfilment—leaving many a day behind darkened by the shadow of shirked duties and lost opportunities.

In others the Will is *capricious*. It tends to fly off at a tangent, under the impulse of some new fancy or whim. This produces the wayward character—the character you never can count upon, never can tell in what mood or temper you will find it,—

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the character that now and then strikes out in an unexpected line, just to show its superiority to restraint, or to enjoy the sense of its own liberty. That the danger of such self-willed capriciousness is grave, the errors and miseries into which it plunges many lives are sufficient witness.

Again, there are cases in which the Will is *slack*. Not a few are troubled with this infirmity. Their Will does not take a clenching grip of any purpose it forms and hold on to it. It is wanting in steadiness, in tenacity, persistence. It sets its aim on a worthy object, and for a while makes an attempt to work towards it, but by and by its energy flags, and it drops the effort because of its tedious monotony, or because of the slow coming of the wished-for result. How much good labour fails to reach its full reward owing to this defect of slackness, it would be impossible to estimate. Yet we see enough to convince us that men and women are often robbed of the high satisfaction on which they fixed their hopes, through the inability of their Will to persevere.

# The Discipline of the Will

Then there is the state of the Will which we usually speak of as *weak*. It is the fault of some fine natures, genial and talented too, that they are easily led. They are pliable to the pressure of other natures that are harder and more assertive. They lack resoluteness to stand by their own conviction, or to act on their own judgment as to what they ought to do. This does not look a glaring fault, yet it may be frightfully damaging. It may mean the crippling of the life. It may render admirable qualities utterly profitless and spoil the good of much that was once fair and promising. For the weak Will causes drifting, and drifting may lead to a moral slavery under which the soul remorsefully writhes.

## 2. DISCIPLINE.

These defects, however, are not incurable. No man or woman is doomed to go on through life with a Will that is sluggish, capricious, unsteady, or weak. The faults of the Will can be remedied, and no one can

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honestly endeavour to remedy them without succeeding in a substantial degree.

But it must be through a process of *Discipline*, and that discipline must be our own individual concern. We must take ourselves in hand, so to speak, and school our Will into greater fitness for the serious business of life. The task may be heavy ; still, if we have any earnestness of feeling, any sense of loyalty to Christ, or faith in the high purpose of God for us, it is our bounden part to attempt it. And as we do attempt it there are invisible forces that come in to assist us. The energies of the Divine Spirit are waiting, ready to sustain, and to co-operate with, every sterling effort of the human soul to rise above its infirmities. We go not on this warfare on our own charges. The very entrance upon the effort is the fulfilment of a condition which guarantees the inspirations of grace from on high.

But how is the process of discipline to be carried on ? What means should be adopted to get the Will balanced and strengthened ?

## The Discipline of the Will

We must take ourselves in hand, as I have said ; and the simplest way to proceed is to frame a few practical rules for the regulation of our conduct,—in such points, for instance, as the arrangement of our duties, and the choice of our voluntary pursuits and associations ; and then try to hold these before the mind as frequently as we possibly can. What the rules should be, must be left to each one's own clearest intelligence to determine ; but if they are framed in the light of earnest thought and with a sincere desire to be faithful to conscience and to Christ, the very anxiety to conform the life to them will tend to rouse the Will and brace it to exertion.

Failures there are sure to be—perhaps many failures. The purpose may be languid, the resolution break down or melt away. Nevertheless, to keep the rules in sight, to fall back upon them, and to repeat and renew the endeavour to shape the actions by them,—these are vital points in the attainment of success. And just as it is by the practice of a certain regimen and system of

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drill, and by trying again and again where he falls short, that the would-be athlete gets his muscles developed into vigorous trim, so it is by the practice of such methods of self-discipline as we find it advisable to frame that we get the Will trained to firmness and strength. Every new effort made after failure helps to bring the Will into line with the course of action marked out,—helps to form its bent and give it greater stability. And so gradually the bent becomes a habit, and habit supplies a momentum of force which is of unspeakable value. Such discipline for the healthy condition of the Will is a solemn obligation laid upon us by the vast interests we have at stake as immortal beings, with our life and destiny largely in our own making.

## 3. APPLICATIONS OF THE DISCIPLINE.

This discipline has to be applied to the action of the Will in various directions.

And first of all, in *the control of the motives*. Most people have their better

## The Discipline of the Will

moments when high thoughts stir them, and they are moved by aspirations after the pure goodness flashed upon them by the Christian ideal. And for the time the Will consents ; it takes sides with the nobler fervour thus kindled. It is swayed by the mind's highest emotions, because meanwhile these are also particularly vivid and strong. Then is the season to fix it, to bring it to a decision, and bend its action towards the highest,—to commit it, in short, to a clear choice of the highest. For the glow of fervour may lose some of its warmth ; the aspiring impulse may somewhat fade, and other motives and feelings awake, of a character more sordid and low. The Will alone can settle whether it is the higher motives or the lower that are to regulate the conduct and life. To the Will belongs the prerogative of determining the critical question, which of them it shall be.

But if the Will has once been pledged to the highest motives when their strength was keenly felt, and if that pledge has been renewed again and again whenever their

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strength was revived, there will be a surer prospect of its growing in ability and inclination to hold fast by those higher motives, even when they happen to be weak, and also to rule down the lower motives, even when *they* happen to be strong. There is no fatal necessity resting on us to obey the strongest motive, as some would have us believe. The strongest is not always the best. And it is part of the august independence of the Will that it can set aside the strongest motive if it is felt to be base, and choose to obey the motives that are felt to be *highest*. The Will undoubtedly does possess that power, and discipline draws it out and confirms it.

Then in *the pursuit of lofty ends* the discipline of the Will is of untold value. Many a person has his visions of the brave, honourable things he should like to do, his glimpses, caught from the spiritual grandeur of Christ, of the objects most truly satisfying and worth striving for in life; and he has formed the resolve that henceforth these objects shall be for him supreme, and his



## The Discipline of the Will

energies be bent to gain them. If, however, that resolve gives way in view of the difficulties or self-denials entailed, what is he to do? He is to grip his purpose once more,—to try to tighten the slackened hold of his Will on the good he sees best calculated to yield genuine wealth and peace. He is to make that effort, and school himself to go on making it; and if he throw himself on the gracious influences that are always available for the upward-striving soul, he will not make it in vain. His Will, more and more, will have its inclination turned towards the things that are truest and best. And so by and by its action will lean towards those things. It will acquire a more decided “set” in that direction, and be more ready to strain forward of its own accord.

This is the way in which all brave steadfastness of character is developed, that steadfastness which shows itself in high-purposed persistency in seeking the good.

There is also the action of the Will in *the resistance of temptation*. We can never be too acutely alive to the imperativeness

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of dealing decisively with the beginnings of evil. The first steps of wrong may be specially seductive, and they may be pressed on the mind by considerations that wear the look of plausibility and force. But if, nevertheless, the unsanctified principle they involve be recognised, or suspected, it becomes solemnly binding to take a stand and hold the Will back, and save it from committing itself by yielding. The golden chance is then, for then it is that resistance is most easy. And were the Will roused to resist at the very beginnings of evil, the awful problem of temptation would be simplified immensely.

Yet we have to confess that it is not always at the beginnings of evil that the struggle to resist is made. Often rather it is only after the bitter effects of evil have been so far felt, or when the haunting shame of it and the unrest it creates have struck home, that the deep longing awakes to fight against it, to cast it off, and rise above it, emancipated and free. Still even in that longing, and that stinging sense of shame,

## The Discipline of the Will

there is a precious opportunity. Let it all be brought to bear upon the slack, sluggish, feeble Will,—let all the penitence and regret, all the holiest convictions, and all the burning yearnings to be once more sincere and true,—let all these be brought to bear upon the Will, and brought to bear upon it time after time, to stir it up from its languor, and nerve it for the grim, yet grand, wrestle which the soul's redemption requires.

It is the fatal mistake of not a few that they rest in their remorse and regrets, or try by eager distractions to forget them, and thereby leave themselves limp and purposeless in presence of further besetments of temptation. The one thing to do is to muster every pang of contrition, every anxious prompting of conscience, and every impulse of the better nature, and fling the pressure of these feelings on the Will, and so persuade or constrain it to put forth its power in the stern grapple with evil. Thus only is it possible for moral victory to be won.

It is a stupendous trust, this endowment

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of a free and independent Will. On the fact that we possess it our individual responsibility rests, and for the manner in which we exercise it we must individually answer. Our unceasing aim, therefore, should be to deal with it honestly, and make it our care to discipline it faithfully, as we have the ability to do, seeking ever to tune it into harmony with the higher will of God.

VII.

THE HALLOWING OF LOVE.



## VII.

### THE HALLOWING OF LOVE.

“A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another ; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.”—JOHN xiii. 34.

“And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given Himself for us.”—EPH. v. 2.

THE transcendent endowment of the soul is its capacity of loving. In the passionate, clinging fondness so abundantly manifest between man and woman, parent and child, friend and friend, immeasurable depths and possibilities of affection are revealed. Love, indeed, is that trace of the divine which shines out with such lustre at times as to redeem the sordidness of human nature, and cast a softer tinge even over its stains. And love lends the touch of romance which preserves the lives of multitudes from utter dreariness and inanity. Its beauty and its pathos, its joys and sorrows, struggles and

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triumphs, belong to the common experience of the race, and serve to intensify the thrill of existence.

And this heightened interest which love gives to life is reflected in the literature of the world all down the ages. In poetry and in song it is the enchantment of this theme that inspires the sweetest strains and wields the strongest spell; and many a moving story is full of the wonderful things endured, dared, and accomplished under the pressure of love's ardent flame.

To purify love at the core, and infuse into it a higher temper, was the object on which the Lord Jesus concentrated the main current of His teaching and the labour of His life. The love which burned in Himself was pure and warm and deep, an outbreathing of the Eternal Love that throbs in the Divine Father's heart; and His anxiety was to draw men and women within its range, that they might catch its glow, and get their own love imbued with a spirit that would bring it into unison with His. "Love one another *as I have loved you*," was the "new commandment"



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He sought to enforce, and that commandment was echoed in the apostolic injunction, "Walk in love, *as Christ also hath loved us.*"

"As I have loved you" ; "as Christ also hath loved us." There the standard is set for the exercise of our affections.

How, then, did Jesus love? What was there that was specially characteristic in the love He displayed?

For one thing, it was a love pervaded by the profoundest reverence.

It is impossible not to be struck with the sensitive respect which Jesus showed to every human being. Never would He trifle with the conscience or the feelings of anyone with whom He came in contact. He recognised in every soul—the soul of man or woman—the stamp of the Divine image, and felt constrained to honour it ; and that gave to His love an elevation that was beautifully chastened and pure.

Moreover, it was a love actuated by a great yearning—the yearning to impart the fullest measure of good and the highest enrichment of life.

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Some imagine they love when they simply desire to *be loved*—when they pine to enjoy all the warm regard and tenderness, and all the kindly service, which another heart can render ; and that, no doubt, is a perfectly natural feeling. Nevertheless, in its own essence, the desire to be loved is not *love*. Jesus desired to be loved ; His heart reached out for confidence, friendship, sympathy. But the supreme passion which moved Him was a longing to *give* rather than to receive, “not to be ministered unto, but to *minister*” (Matt. xx. 28). And what He longed to give was of His best, and for the best interests of those for whom He cared. His love was an irrepressible yearning to lavish the wealth of His own soul on other souls, to pour out on other souls the treasures of blessedness which He Himself enjoyed in the fellowship and service of the Father, and thereby to make them also rich in true and satisfying good.

Here, in this reverential, high-purposed love of the Lord Jesus, we find the ideal of what all human love should be. And when the affection we bear for others becomes

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charged with a similar delicacy of respect for their inviolable spiritual rights, and with a similar loftiness of aim for the ennobling and enriching of their lives, then it takes on a sanctity it did not possess before. It is tuned to a diviner key. That is the Hallowing of Love—loving *as Jesus loved*. And the effect of it is potent and sure. It transforms the power of loving into a gracious, exalting force which tells beneficently on life in many marvellous ways, and these are indicated by the following considerations.

## I. THE APPRECIATIVE INSIGHT OF LOVE.

Nothing sees so deeply or so truly into the secrets of another's character as love, and nothing is so quick to perceive the promise of excellence that may be latent there. "Love is blind," says the old proverb; and blind indeed, in some sense, it may be to surface blemishes and frailties: but that is only because its gaze is fixed so intently on the capabilities of good which its penetrating vision has discovered beneath. Experience

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proves that love has a piercing intuition to which many things otherwise invisible are disclosed. Every one knows that only by a heart of affection in a fellow-man can his own heart be read justly. No person who judges with suspicion, jealousy, or frigid indifference can rightly understand another. As Maeterlinck puts it : "He who sees without loving is only straining his eyes in the darkness." In fact, the more fervent the regard we cherish for those bound up with us in life, the more astonishing becomes our keenness of glance in discerning the better qualities that lie hidden behind their failings.

But that keenness of glance for the better qualities is vastly quickened if the affection that beats in the heart is hallowed by sympathy with the mind and heart of Christ. For then there is begotten an eagerness to *search for* the better qualities, and to recognise them and frankly give credit for them wherever they are perceived. As to how love thus worked in Jesus we have notable illustrations in His appreciative treatment of Peter (John i. 42), of Zaccheus (Luke xix. 5-9), and

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of the Penitent Woman in the house of Simon the Pharisee (Luke vii. 37-48).

Recognition, appreciation—that is precisely what thousands are craving for amid the weakness and failure of which they are painfully conscious. Who can reckon the blessing that is brought to human souls when they feel that some other human soul really believes in the good that is in them yet, and is willing to respect them for it, willing also to make allowance for their infirmities? That kindles fresh hope in many a heavy-laden breast. It wakens the earnest resolve to act more faithfully on the higher promptings that still stir within. It inspires to a renewal of effort in living the true life and treading the upward way. Precious beyond conception is the helpful ministry of encouragement that springs from the appreciative insight of a pure and Christlike love.

### 2. THE INVENTIVE GENIUS OF LOVE.

The ingenuity of love is proverbial ; and in face of difficulties encountered in meeting the requirements of those whose good it seeks,

# The Higher Powers of the Soul

love displays a fertility of resource which is often amazing. It can devise means of doing a kindly service, or in forestalling a coming necessity, on which mere calculating prudence could never have hit.

“Ah, how skilful grows the hand  
That obeyeth love’s command!  
It is the heart, and not the brain,  
That to the highest doth attain;  
And he who followeth love’s behest  
Far exceedeth all the rest.”

But let love be tuned into unison with the pure spirit of Jesus, and its ingenuity sets to work in a peculiarly lofty direction. What it plans to do then is to raise the standard of thought and action within the range of its influence. It brings its tact to bear on the elevation of purpose and feeling in other minds. This we see in the case of the Master Himself. What unfailing resourcefulness He exhibited in meeting the deeper spiritual needs of the men and women with whom He had to deal! We can scarcely imagine anything wiser, or more dexterously suited to the occasion and the

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persons concerned, than His method of procedure with Nicodemus (John iii. 1-13), the Woman of Samaria (John iv. 1-20), the Paralytic at Capernaum (Mark ii. 1-11), Mary of Bethany (John xii. 1-8), and even with Judas Iscariot and Pontius Pilate—though with regard to these last His gracious intention was foiled. The inventiveness of His love can never be surpassed.

And for the sanctified ingenuity of our own love there is ample scope afforded in the realm of home-life, in the confidential intimacies of friendship, and in every close and tender bond that unites heart to heart. There, the higher the quality of the affection entertained, the more surely will it result in a mutual endeavour to help each other to nobler ideals, to foster in each other generous sympathies, to lift each other up to worthy aims. Such an endeavour has its perplexities and its exacting demands, yet the tactful skill of a high and hallowed love may be counted upon to solve the problems that arise ; and it may accomplish marvels of ingenuity in carrying out the sacred purpose it has in view.

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## 3. THE SACRIFICIAL IMPULSE OF LOVE.

Herein lies the beauty, as well as the power, of love—in its ready disposition to bear toil, pain, and heavy risk that others may be gladdened and helped. What touching tales the secret records of humanity could tell of the privations and sufferings endured, without murmuring or grudging, when affection was the motive that fired the heart! It is such manifestations of self-devotion that shed a ray of brightness over this dark world, and illumine the outlook for the ultimate uplifting of the race.

Never was the sacrifice of personal interest and ease carried to a degree more sublime than by Jesus, our Lord. His was a self-renunciation which confronted scorn, shame, hardship, death itself, in working for the spiritual regeneration of men, and all because of the love for them which glowed in His breast. And all love that draws its inspiration from His will show a kindred willingness to renounce every narrow consideration of self, and risk every sharp severity, in the effort



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to further the higher well-being of any soul it can reach. And if ever the presence of a divine element in our maimed human nature is revealed,—if ever there are felt, shining

“through all this fleshly dress  
Bright shoots of everlastingness,”—

it is when the self-devotion of a Christlike love gleams in the eyes, and lights up the face, and impels to deeds of generous service and sacrifice for the sake of lifting another to a richer good and a purer joy.

## 4. THE VICTORIOUS EFFICACY OF LOVE.

There is a subtle, overmastering attraction in love which is not easy to resist. The soured, sullen heart leaps up to greet you, and surrenders to you its confidence and trust, when it becomes aware of your affectionate appreciation of the germs of worth it still has within. You draw out the best in another by the sympathetic recognition of his best which your warm good-will prompts you to accord.

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And when love goes to the extent of self-sacrifice, it wields a conquering power which nothing else can match. Few can hold out persistently against the steady devotion of a generous soul that undertakes hardships freely in planning and working for their good. That willing endurance of labour and pain is the one proof of love which even hatred cannot altogether withstand. Opposition, anger, jealousy, bitterness melt away before the gracious influence of a sincere and self-denying love. Indeed, the victories thus gained by love are an endless surprise.

Love is never wasted. Though its efforts may seem for a time to go for nought, yet the good it strives to accomplish is sure to be reached in some measure in the end. How disappointing all the lavish self-devotion of Jesus appeared when those whom He sought to bless rejected Him and hounded Him to the cross! And yet the winning spell of that very self-devotion worked on more mightily than ever after He had passed beyond the sphere of mortal sight. It was the charm of His pure and self-renouncing

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love that overcame hostility and unbelief, and it is overcoming still. That cross on which He died has been making its silent appeal to generation after generation as the years roll by. It is the appeal of suffering, redeeming love; the appeal of a love that sacrificed, that gave up all in self-forgetting passion for the good of all, that saved others though itself it could not save. And before that appeal, obstinacy, self-will and pride, reckless vanity and hardened viciousness, have been constrained to give way and own themselves conquered by its divinely captivating power.

And no love that has in it the spirit that pervaded Christ's can ever toil or suffer in vain. Its effects—though for long, perhaps, unseen—are real, and they may be striking deeper than can be conceived. They may continue to grow and accumulate, and produce an ever-enlarging amount of good after the earthly life has come to a close. For

“Love lives on, and hath a power to bless  
When they that loved are hidden in their graves.”

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## 5. THE IMPERISHABLE VITALITY OF LOVE.

A true and pure affection, fired by high and sacred aims, is a deathless thing. It possesses a freshness that is immortal. The proverbs of the world have seized and enshrined this truth. "Mother's love is ever in its spring"; "Many waters cannot quench love"; "True love never grows old"; "Love is strong as death." In point of fact, the moment one soul meets another in the mutual surrender of love, there rises in them the consciousness of something eternal. And in proportion as their love is a hallowed feeling, sanctified, as Christ's was, by reverence and by regard for life's spiritual ends, it forms a bond of adamantine firmness, which only grows the stronger through the changing years, as the burden of toil and care has to be borne together, and the wrestle with trouble waged. And if we wish to have the relish of life heightened, and the heart kept young up to life's last hour and in the unseen beyond, our sincere anxiety should be to cultivate the power of loving as

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Jesus loved. Then a benign, sweetening influence would pass into all our closest human relationships, making them finer and truer ; and we should grasp the secret of finding blessedness in spreading blessing, which, as Browning reminds us, is ever a rich and sufficing reward.

“For life, with all it yields of joy and woe,  
And hope and fear—  
Is just our chance o’ the prize of learning love,  
How love might be, hath been indeed, and is ;  
And that we hold henceforth to the uttermost  
Such prize, despite the envy of the world.”



VIII.

CHRIST'S KNOWLEDGE OF THE  
SOUL.





## VIII.

### CHRIST'S KNOWLEDGE OF THE SOUL.

“He knew what was in man.”—JOHN ii. 25.

“And Jesus knew their thoughts, and said unto them.”—MATT. xii. 25.

“And immediately when Jesus perceived in His spirit that they so reasoned within themselves, He said unto them, Why reason ye these things in your hearts?”—MARK ii. 8.

“Jesus saw Nathanael coming to Him, and saith of him, Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile! Nathanael saith unto Him, Whence knowest Thou me? Jesus answered and said unto him, Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig tree, I saw thee.”—JOHN i. 47-48.

A UNIQUE feature in Jesus, as compared with other great leaders and teachers, was His attitude towards men. It was marked by a strange mingling of respect and reserve, of confidence and caution, yearning tenderness and watchful restraint.

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An instance of this is recorded in connection with one of His visits to Jerusalem at the time of the Passover feast. He had preached His Good News to the pilgrims and strangers who crowded the city, and had strongly impressed them by the wonderful acts of healing He performed ; yet, although many of them believed in His mysterious superiority and were willing to recognise Him as Messiah, He held Himself warily back, and would not "commit Himself unto them." And the reason suggested by the Evangelist is that He read their hearts too clearly, and saw that their newly awakened enthusiasm was not of a kind to be trusted fully. It was not an enthusiasm founded on devotion to His spiritual worth, but on extravagant expectations of the temporal power and splendour it was hoped He would soon assume. He longed for the faith of those men ; but the faith they were giving Him was shallow, too much tinctured with selfish ideas : and as He detected this disappointing element in it, He could not freely respond, nor throw His heart open

# Christ's Knowledge of the Soul

as otherwise He would have been glad to do.

The circumstance is particularly noted as an example of the profound penetration of Jesus. He understood the workings of human nature—understood them directly and at first hand, and did not need to depend on the testimony of others. He could pierce with startling accuracy to the inmost secrets of men's souls. And again and again in the story of His life there is abundant evidence to prove the Evangelist's statement true, that "He knew what was in man."

## THE PHILOSOPHER'S GRASP.

I. Jesus knew what was in man because He saw all men with the eye of a *Philosopher*.

It is the province of the philosopher to search into the human mind and gain a comprehension of its various faculties—what they are, what each is fitted for, and how they act and react upon one another. And for long centuries mental science has been a favourite pursuit among learned men.

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And the fascination of the study is kept alive by the new aspects of human nature which are ever being brought to light. The philosopher, as he pursues his investigations, discovers the marvellous mechanism of man's inner being—the manifold endowments that compose it, the complex forces that work within it ; and he tries to grasp its intricate movements with all the ingenuity he can command.

Jesus had the philosopher's eye, and to Him the capacities of the human mind were a subject of absorbing interest. He knew the power that resides in the Conscience, and He appealed to men to put it forth by the challenge, "Why even of yourselves judge ye not that which is right?" (Luke xii. 57). He knew the power of Memory, and He relied on His disciples to use it after He was gone in preserving and recording His words and deeds. He knew the power of Imagination, and called it into service by His parables, as a means of apprehending and picturing spiritual truth. He knew the colossal power of the Will, and

## Christ's Knowledge of the Soul

reproached the sense-bound and wayward for their failure to exercise it aright for their lasting good : "Ye *will* not come unto Me that ye might have life" (John v. 40). And He knew the benign and winsome power of Love, and sought to purify its tone and quality, that it might become a richer source of blessing to mankind.

The elaborate constitution of man's spirit lay with amazing clearness before His vision. He had a keen discernment of its intricate modes of operation, and He always stood before it with a certain reverence, but reverence tinged with a feeling of awe, because He discerned also the perilous perversions to which it is liable. The fact is that no one ever had such an intense conception of the grandeur of human nature, and at the same time no one was ever able to realise so impressively the stupendous responsibility which the possession of such a nature entails. From the philosopher's standpoint He knew what was in man.

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## THE POET'S INTUITION.

2. Jesus knew what was in man because He saw all men with the eye of a *Poet*.

To know the constitution of human nature as the philosopher knows it, is not in the truest sense to know men. There is one who penetrates farther than the philosopher, and that is the poet. The poet gets at the inner springs of a man's life ; he feels the pulse as the philosopher cannot do. Even in the interpretation of outward physical nature, the poet sees deeper than the man of science sees. The man of science, the philosopher, discovers the materials, the forces and laws of working, in the outer world into the secrets of which he pries ; but the poet seizes on something in that same outer world more subtle, more elusive—and that is the *feeling*, the hidden meaning, the mystic charm or majesty, which lies behind. The poet can tell us more of the inner spirit, the mystery and glory, of the material world than all the scientific sages can. So, in the interpretation of human nature, where the

# Christ's Knowledge of the Soul

mere philosopher sees only the action and interaction of certain mental and emotional powers, the poet sees the pathos of the heart-strain, the nobleness of the purpose, the heroism burning through the homely deed, or the dark tragedy behind the smiling show.

It was this deeper vision of the poet that Jesus had in a superlative degree. Physical nature to Him was an open book which He could read with surpassing ease, drawing unexpected suggestions, hints of beauty and wonder, from the blooming lilies by the lake-shore, the grape-clusters hanging on the vines, the waving corn ripening for the harvest, the red glow of the clouds in the sunset sky. And He could see as deeply into human nature also. He could discern, and hold up to view, the moral worth that lends a secret dignity to the most commonplace life ; He could discern the beauty of feeling that may shine behind the simplest action, the wealth of heart that may be concealed under the plainest exterior, the brave loyalty to right that may give its high motive to the daily round of the most hum-

## The Higher Powers of the Soul

drum duties. He could discern all this, and reveal it to the world's gaze for all coming time in a way that has never been rivalled. The poet's illuminating vision—the fine vision of imaginative sympathy—was possessed by Jesus as a superb and original gift. He could see the hidden spiritual value of the widow's mites cast into the temple treasury (Mark xii. 42-44). He could see the rich, tender grace of the generous offer of a cup of cold water to a thirsty passer-by (Matt. x. 42). He could see the warm, true spirit that throbbed behind a healed leper's simple gratitude (Luke xvii. 17-19). He could see the ardent struggle of hope and faith that heaved up through a lowly penitent's tears (Luke vii. 41-48). He knew all the finest, noblest, greatest things possible for the human soul, even under the most prosaic surroundings. And thus He has shed a glow over man's existence here on earth that is immensely inspiring. He has revealed the secret beauty, the moral worth and dignity, which a man's life may have in it, lowly on



# Christ's Knowledge of the Soul

the surface though its appearance may be. And for this revelation of eternal values in the plain doings of plain people we stand for ever in His debt, since it is fitted to kindle hope and courage in every earnest heart.

## THE PROPHET'S FORESIGHT.

3. Again, Jesus knew what was in man because He saw all men with the eye of a *Prophet*.

What is the distinctive characteristic of a prophet? It is not simply, as the popular idea supposes, that he can predict the future fortunes of men or nations; it is something far higher. It is that he can divine beforehand the inevitable outcome and effect of things—that he can discern the direction in which particular habits and dispositions are bound to lead, the ultimate results to which particular forms of conduct are sure to come. The prophet takes his stand not on mere cleverness, or the faculty of second sight, or clairvoyance of any sort, but on what he knows of the fixed eternal laws and the moral order of the universe.

# The Higher Powers of the Soul

That was the position of the ancient prophets of Israel. They were not mere predictors of coming events; they were forecasters of the good or evil effects which they saw must necessarily follow from the tendencies at work in their own times. They caught a glimpse of the essential trend of their fellow-countrymen's ways of living, of the blessing or the curse which the principles of the divine government—which never fail to operate—would bring upon their actions as the years rolled on. It was a gift of high order, this gift of prophetic foresight, and it required a high quality of soul.

It belonged to Jesus as to no other. He knew men not only as they actually were, but as—unconsciously to themselves—they were gradually *growing to be*. He had a quick, piercing insight into the consequences to which men's tempers and modes of conduct were tending. From the particular desires and emotions which He saw seething in a man's soul, He knew whither that man was going, what kind of future he was

# Christ's Knowledge of the Soul

making for himself, what the issues of his life, for time and eternity, would be.

And His teaching on this point is of measureless value. We owe more than we can estimate to Jesus for the light He has flashed on the inevitable tendencies of the moral dispositions and motives that sway human hearts. He has fulfilled the office of a prophet inasmuch as He has given us a forecast of the results which are being steadily wrought out in the depths of our being by the inclinations and tempers we most habitually cherish. He has shown us, because He saw so clearly Himself, that a pure and real satisfaction is the infallible outcome to which all high and sacred purpose leads ; and that emptiness, darkness, and the blight of happiness are the natural effects of a greedy, envious, selfish heart.

## THE LOVER'S IDEALISM.

4. Above all, Jesus knew what was in man because He saw all men with the eye of a *Lover*.

# The Higher Powers of the Soul

As pointed out in a previous section of this book, love is quick to discern the hidden good lying beneath the faults in another's character, and also that love is eager to devise and strive for the unfolding of that good and the freeing of it from its encumbering imperfections.

For the lover is usually an idealist.

Now, an idealist is not, as many conceive, a sentimental dreamer, a builder of castles in the air, an idle visionary, dwelling in a realm of vague, ethereal fancies. An idealist is one who sees the mighty law behind the commonplace fact—sees the possible statue within the rough block of stone, the rich blossom within the dull, colourless bud, the potential goodness within the imperfect character.

And Jesus was a great Idealist because He was a great Lover. He knew what was in man because the warm, unselfish yearning of His own soul drew Him into living touch with all the latent good, all that was truest and best, in the human souls around Him. He divined that latent good, and felt it; and what was more, He believed in it, and

# Christ's Knowledge of the Soul

sought to call it forth and raise it to perfection. We can remember how He caught sight at once of the hidden elements of loyalty and strength beneath the impetuous, volatile, irritating temperament of Simon Peter (John i. 42), and how, with His gracious, longing glance, He dived into the soul of the shady-practiced Zaccheus, and beheld in him the makings of a true and godly man (Luke xix. 8-9).

No doubt Jesus was alive to all the flaws and frailties that blemish the lives of men ; yet, just because He loved men, and loved them so intensely, He was moved to seek for, and find out, the slumbering germs of worth in every soul : and when He found them, He believed in them ; He laboured to stir them up, to develop and strengthen them, to nourish them to fulness and power. He saw the potential nobleness beneath the actual faultiness, and He surrendered Himself to the task of helping men to attain that potential nobleness as a reality. That was the work to which He devoted His life, the object for which He faced the tragedy of

## The Higher Powers of the Soul

Calvary. He had in His mind's eye the *ideal* of what He knew and believed every man has it in him, by God's grace, to be. And the vision of that ideal—the ultimate redemption of men's souls from the bondage and stain of sin—was the joy set before Him, the joy that cheered Him on, and that nerved Him at last to “endure the cross, despising the shame.”

It was a Divine Lover's sacrifice for what He knew to be worth saving in every human soul. And on that sacrifice rests His claim upon our devotion and faith. Love should answer love, and welcome it—that the heart of the Lover and the heart of the loved may be knit together by a bond which neither change nor death can sunder.

## APPENDIX.

It may be stated that in this work the Higher Powers of the Soul are dealt with specially in the light of the culture that may, and ought, to be given to them under the guidance and inspiration of Christ. This is the aspect of the subject which is kept steadily in view, and it accounts for the passages of exhortation that here and there occur.

Ample material for the philosophical study of the mental and moral capacities of man may be found in the standard text-books on Psychology, and in the writings of Professors Green, Sidgwick, and William James. But in following a practical line of treatment, such as that adopted in the foregoing pages, the expositor or preacher has to draw from his direct observation of the workings of

## Appendix

human nature, and from the results of careful reflection on his own personal experience.

In addition to this, however, much valuable help may be obtained from the three separate "Studies in the Christian Character" which we owe to Dean Church, Bishop Paget, and Dr. J. R. Illingworth—works which are distinguished by their chasteness of style, fine insight, lofty range of thought, and intimate knowledge of the subject.

The rich stores of biographical literature may also be wisely utilised, as a means of furnishing concrete examples of the operation of those influences which tend most powerfully to mould the life of the soul.



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